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Mainstreaming disability in the development agenda

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2010/13, provides an overview of the way in which the United Nations system, in partnership with Member States and other stakeholders, is coordinating efforts to mainstream disability into policies and programmes, and it recognizes that notable progress has been made in this regard. As the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals draws nearer, the report identifies critical opportunities to promote the inclusion of disability in the global development framework. In particular, the report examines the role of the United Nations system in accelerating efforts to mainstream disability in the global development agenda towards 2015 and beyond.

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I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming disability in the development agenda (E/CN.5/2010/6), adopted resolution 2010/13, in which it requested the Secretary-General to report to the Commission for Social Development at its fiftieth session on the progress made in mainstreaming disability in the development agenda.

2. In two previous reports to the Economic and Social Council (E/CN.5/2010/6 and E/CN.5/2008/6), the Secretary-General addressed the status of mainstreaming disability in the development agenda. The first report reviewed the practicalities and resources related to mainstreaming disability in the development agenda in the context of the newly emerging international normative framework on disability, following the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the General Assembly in December 2006.[1] The second report provided an overview of the status of disability-inclusion in international development cooperation within the framework of multilateral, bilateral and regional initiatives.

3. The multiple crises, economic, social and environmental, facing the world today further underscore the need for an international development agenda grounded in sustainability, inclusion and equality. The international normative framework on disability, consisting of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (1982), the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1994) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), provides a comprehensive and holistic approach for the inclusion of the disability perspective and persons with disabilities in all aspects of economic and social development. With the strengthened normative framework, the General Assembly reiterated, in recent resolutions, the urgency of including disability in all aspects of the work towards the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals.[2] Despite the reinforced commitment of the international community, disability and persons with disabilities still remain largely invisible in development efforts and have yet to be included in the mainstream international development agenda.

4. As the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 approaches, the international community has begun to work towards a post-2015 development framework. The General Assembly decided, at its sixty-fifth session to consider the convening of a high-level meeting on disability and development at its sixty-seventh session. This initiative is expected to provide an invaluable opportunity to consider global strategies for disability mainstreaming towards 2015 and beyond, placing disability as an integral part of the future development agenda.

5. Successful mainstreaming of disability in development requires the commitment and action of all key stakeholders, including the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations, Governments, civil society organizations, in particular organizations of persons with disabilities, academic institutions and the private sector. The present report specifically focuses on and outlines the catalytic role of the United Nations system in mainstreaming disability in the ongoing global, regional and national efforts in the context of the Millennium

[1] General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I.

[2] General Assembly resolutions 63/150, 64/131 and 65/186.

Development Goals and in the post-2015 development framework. In particular, it examines strategic actions for promoting the mainstreaming of disability in the areas of data, statistics and knowledge on disability and development, multi-stakeholder partnerships and accessibility. These are considered prerequisites for ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities and their concerns in all aspects of society and development.

II. Mainstreaming disability in a global development context

6. Disability is a global concern. It affects individuals everywhere in the world and can happen to anyone at any stage of life. Current estimates indicate that over one billion people, or approximately 15 per cent of the world's population, are living with some form of disability. As a result of global trends in population ageing and a global increase in chronic health conditions, the incidence of impairment and disability among the general population is expected to increase. When the family members of persons with disabilities are taken into account, a much larger proportion of the population is affected by disability.

7. As detailed in the report of the Secretary-General to the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities,[3] disability is experienced disproportionately by those living in developing countries, and persons with disabilities are more likely to experience poverty.[4] Social exclusion and discrimination experienced by persons with disabilities create further challenges to the full enjoyment of their human rights and inclusion in development and render persons with disabilities more vulnerable in times of crisis, including the recent humanitarian, economic, food and other crises.

A. Disability and the United Nations development agenda

8. Over the last two decades, United Nations international conferences and summits have led to a globally shared vision of development, resulting in the adoption of an array of development goals, of which the Millennium Development Goals are an integral part. This vision has come to be called the United Nations development agenda. These global development goals, collectively focused on different dimensions of development, produce an evolving but comprehensive vision of and a strategic framework for development by addressing a broad range of issues, including poverty reduction, women's equality and empowerment, food and energy security, public health, governance and environmental sustainability.

9. The General Assembly has noted that it is impossible to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, without the inclusion and integration of the rights, well-being and perspectives of persons with disabilities in development efforts at the national, regional and international levels.[1] Furthermore, in the 2010 outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, Heads of State and Government noted that making

[3] A/66/128.

[4] WHO and the World Bank, *World Report on Disability* (Geneva, 2011).

development processes accessible to, and inclusive of, persons with disabilities is critical to attaining the Millennium Development Goals.[5]

10. The international community will have critical opportunities to ensure the inclusion of disability in the United Nations development framework even before 2015. In June 2012, the international community will gather in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio plus 20. The social pillar of sustainable development should be strengthened and the disability perspective should be included in the dialogue and outcome of the Conference, so that the international community, through its commitment to sustainable development, may not only harness the potential of untapped resources by including persons with disabilities to generate improved development outcomes for all but also to fulfil its obligations with regard to human rights.

11. Other critical opportunities include the 2015 deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the concurrent processes for establishing a post-2015 development framework. The international community has already begun to consider a development framework beyond 2015 and has the chance to ensure that disability is included in any emerging framework.

B. Mainstreaming disability: the twin-track approach to promoting the disability perspective and the empowerment of persons with disabilities

12. Although the importance of mainstreaming disability in development is increasingly recognized, it is still necessary to elucidate what mainstreaming will entail in practice, both within the United Nations system and in its work with Governments, civil society and other stakeholders. The United Nations promotes the "twin-track approach" for equalizing opportunities for persons with disabilities, which consists of: (a) integrating disability-sensitive measures into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes and (b) providing disability-specific initiatives to support the empowerment of persons with disabilities. The balance between mainstreaming strategies and targeted-support should be tailored to address the needs of specific communities; but the overall goal should always be integrating and including persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development.

13. The twin-track approach to mainstreaming disability captures one of the overarching objectives of the work of the United Nations — the equalization of opportunities and the recognition of persons with disabilities as both agents and beneficiaries of development. This notion of mainstreaming the disability perspective in development is detailed in the report of the Secretary-General in the fifth quinquennial review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.[6] Lessons may also be drawn from the efforts of the United Nations to advance the equality and empowerment of women through gender mainstreaming, which adopts a twin-track approach to gender equality and empowerment of women.

[5] General Assembly resolution 65/1.

[6] See A/63/183, sect. IV.A.

14. Since the adoption of agreed conclusions on gender mainstreaming by the Economic and Social Council in 1997,[7] United Nations entities have made substantial advances in the integration of a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of their policies and programmes. In some cases, United Nations entities have also undertaken gender-specific measures, including the establishment of gender focal points, gender audits and capacity development initiatives, to support gender equality.[8]

15. While United Nations entities are also taking important steps to mainstream disability in their policies and programmes, challenges remain.[9] A review of the United Nations common country development frameworks[10] at the country level from 1997-2010 found that while some countries have included a reference to persons with disabilities in their national development priorities, it is always in the context of initiatives to support disability-specific programming rather than mainstreaming of disability in the general system of services and facilities made available to the rest of society.[11] These findings present a starting point for strengthening mainstreaming of disability and a baseline for measuring progress.

III. The role of the United Nations system in promoting a disability-inclusive global development agenda

16. Over the last three decades, the United Nations has reiterated the essentiality and centrality of the premise that the advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities in society and development is a prerequisite for the realization of human rights, peace and security. In that context, the international community has long recognized that the inclusion of persons with disabilities, as both agents and beneficiaries, is an essential condition for inclusive development.[12]

17. Some progress has already been made by the United Nations system in mainstreaming disability in its work, based on the international normative framework on disability and development, which has been strengthened by the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[13] For example, progress in advancing evidence-based approaches to advancing the mainstreaming of disability in development is shown in the publication of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, *World Report on Disability* in 2011.[4]

18. Despite this important benchmark, the findings of the report also indicate that the international community still faces major challenges to the inclusion of disability as an integral part of the mainstream development agenda.

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[7] A/52/3/Rev.1, chap. IV.A, agreed conclusions 1997/2.

[8] E/2010/57, para. 52.

[9] See A/66/128.

[10] The review looked at the common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework process, which is explained in section III below.

[11] See Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Baseline review on mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities into United Nations country level programming", 2010 (http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/baseline_study_2010.doc).

[12] World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, see A/37/351/Add.1 and Corr.1, annex, sect. VIII, recommendation 1 (iv).

[13] See A/65/173.

A. Mainstreaming disability in the United Nations operational framework for development

19. Within the United Nations system, the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, comprised of over 25 entities of the United Nations system, serves as an effective mechanism for promoting a coordinated and coherent, system-wide approach towards integration of the rights of persons with disabilities into development. The Inter-Agency Support Group utilizes the strengths and comparative advantages of the different entities of the United Nations system, engaged at the global, regional and national levels.

20. In an effort to integrate disability into the overall United Nations operational framework for development, the Inter-Agency Support Group has worked closely with the United Nations Development Group, which unites 32 entities of the United Nations system that play a role in development. The objective of the Development Group is to enhance coordination within the United Nations system to deliver more coherent, effective and efficient support to Member States seeking to attain the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.[14]

21. In October 2010, the United Nations Development Group endorsed a "Guidance note on integrating the rights of persons with disabilities in United Nations programming at the country level" for United Nations country teams, which was developed by a joint United Nations Development Group/Inter-Agency Support Group task team established by the Development Group's Working Group on Programming Issues.[15] The guidance note is intended to strengthen coordination of efforts to mainstream disability in the joint planning and implementation of programmes at the country level. It offers practical guidelines and outlines entry points for integration of disability in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process, the main common country operational framework for United Nations development programmes at the country level.

22. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework, when fully articulated, describes in its narrative and its results matrix the outcomes that the United Nations system is committed to deliver in support of the development priorities of a specific Government. The effective implementation of the guidance note would ensure that countries are set on the path of disability mainstreaming in alignment with national development priorities and the goals pertaining to the international global development agenda.

23. New and recent United Nations initiatives relating to human rights and development cooperation also present opportunities to advance the mainstreaming of disability. These include the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the United Nations Development Group human rights mainstreaming mechanism, the Development Cooperation Forum of the Economic and Social Council and the Council's annual ministerial review.

24. In the course of its four sessions to date, the Conference of States Parties has established itself as a unique global forum for advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. The steady increase in participants from the United Nations system,

[14] See www.undg.org.

[15] For a copy of the guidance note see http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=16.

civil society, academic and research institutions and financial institutions, and in observers from around the world, demonstrates the utility of the forum in terms of advancing disability issues. In particular, participants and observers, given broad participation in the Conference, enjoy the opportunity to explore options for multi-stakeholder partnerships towards the goal of mainstreaming disability in all aspects of society and development.

25. The United Nations Development Group human rights mainstreaming mechanism is a relatively new initiative that aims to strengthen the capacity of United Nations funds, agencies and programmes to engage in human rights-related activities at the country level.[16] It offers an opportunity to integrate disability principles relating to the inclusion of human rights in United Nations operational activities for development into the advocacy efforts of the United Nations Development Group.[17]

26. Attainment of the goal of mainstreaming disability in the global development agenda requires that the interlinkages between disability and global development priorities, including poverty reduction, climate change, sustainable development, financing for development and development cooperation, should be promoted at a substantive level. Realization of this goal requires strategic interdepartmental and cross-sectoral efforts to influence and collaborate with Member States and other relevant actors.

27. From this perspective, the Development Cooperation Forum and the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council both present entry points for advocacy efforts to promote disability-inclusive development by transforming the framework for development cooperation and, in particular, by eliminating built-in disability-discriminatory biases, whether legal, attitudinal or environmental.

28. Furthermore, as a principal forum for multi-stakeholder dialogue on development cooperation at a global level, the Development Cooperation Forum can facilitate different channels of cooperation in the area of disability, including through development assistance, multilateral or bilateral aid, South-South or triangular cooperation and other technical cooperation, as discussed in section IV below.

B. Coordination of efforts across the United Nations system for mainstreaming disability in development

29. While disability is gaining more prominence in the mandates of individual organizations of the United Nations system, there is a growing need to harness the expertise from across the United Nations system and to foster concerted efforts to create synergies in order to effectively mainstream disability in all development efforts.

30. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is the global focal point on disability for the United Nations system. The Department and the Office of the

[16] The mechanism was established pursuant to a recommendation in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1).

[17] See http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=1452.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as the co-chairs of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, have taken initiatives and actions in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including Governments and civil society organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities, the private sector and academia, to coordinate the strategic efforts of the United Nations system in the field of disability.

31. In order to raise awareness on disability as a cross-cutting development issue, and with a view to promoting evidenced-based approach to policy development, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has conducted a number of studies[18] on mainstreaming disability in development in the past three years, including panel discussions, focusing on mainstreaming disability in international cooperation, held in conjunction with the Commission for Social Development at its forty-eighth and forty-ninth sessions. In addition, various initiatives have been undertaken to identify strategic policy frameworks and entry points for mainstreaming disability and to foster multi-stakeholder partnerships, addressing issues ranging from disability-inclusive development cooperation to disability-inclusive AIDS programming,[19] from education for children with disabilities to women with disabilities in conflicts, and from empowering persons with disabilities through sports[20] to disability-inclusive disaster management.[21]

32. For example, in an effort to promote the inclusion of disability in the context of poverty eradication efforts, a panel discussion[22] was co-organized with the Special Rapporteur on disability of the Commission for Social Development, in collaboration with the Governments of Finland, Japan and Norway, the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Disability and Development, at which good practices of disability-inclusion in development were shared, with a view to contributing to successful poverty eradication and development for all. In March 2011, a seminar on "Mainstreaming disability in development cooperation"[23] was organized by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, in collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on disability of the Commission for Social Development and with the support of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to examine challenges faced in mainstreaming disability in development cooperation policies and programmes. For the past two years, the annual International Day of Persons with

[18] Both A/66/121 and A/66/128 were based on original research conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

[19] The Department of Economic and Social Affairs collaborated with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) in organizing the side event to the High-level Meeting on AIDS in June 2011, to enhance integration of an inclusive and accessible approach to AIDS programming for persons with disabilities (further information is available at: http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1572).

[20] See http://www.un.org/disabilities.

[21] During the International Donors' Conference on Haiti in March 2010, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized a panel discussion entitled "Haiti: Reconstruction for All", which was co-sponsored by the Global Partnership for Disability and Development, the Government of Canada, the World Bank and Disabled Peoples' International.

[22] "Mainstreaming disability in development for poverty eradication" in February 2011 in New York (further information is available from http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/events/csocd49panel.pdf).

[23] The full report is available from http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/4/Mainstreaming_Disability_in_Development.pdf.

Disabilities has been observed, in collaboration with the United Nations system and key stakeholders, under the theme of mainstreaming disability in development, to raise awareness of the importance of disability-inclusive development and to mobilize strategic partnerships.

33. The Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted a joint strategy and plan of action,[24] which has been developed for concerted action towards mainstreaming disability by the United Nations system. With efforts to mainstream disability gaining momentum, the membership of the Inter-Agency Support Group has expanded markedly in the last two years, and it currently includes the United Nations regional commissions.

34. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, together with relevant stakeholders from both within and outside the United Nations system, has also been supporting efforts to enhance national and institutional capacities through technical cooperation. For example, a capacity-development workshop was co-organized with OHCHR in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in November 2010 in Trinidad and Tobago. In September 2011, at the request of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country office in Croatia, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and OHCHR conducted a workshop on the implementation of the Convention for Western Balkan countries. At the workshop, global experts from academic institutions[25] collaborated to share good practices regarding disability inclusion. They explored ways to build national and institutional capacity in Balkan States with a view to enhancing coherence and coordination between line ministries, as well as between Government agencies and civil society organizations. In June 2010, a United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Accessibility: Innovative and cost-effective approaches for inclusive and accessible development[26] was organized, in collaboration with the World Bank. The meeting identified policy-oriented recommendations and priority actions for strengthening capacities to promote disability-inclusive development.

IV. Looking forward: strategies for promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and development

A. Strengthen data, statistics and knowledge on disability and development

Disability data and statistics

35. Disability statistics can reveal the experiences and situations of persons with disabilities. In particular, data that are disaggregated on the basis of demographic features such as sex and age or socio-economic status (including factors such as education and employment), can provide a crucial factual basis for all stages of the

[24] The joint strategy and plan of action is comprised of seven goals, which constitute the basis for concerted and coordinated support by the United Nations to Member States in their implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

[25] Including the University of Southern California and the Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre, University College, University of London.

[26] The full report of the meeting is available from http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1516.

effective development of policy design and implementation. It is also an essential element of accurate monitoring and evaluation to assess the degree to which policies, projects or approaches have succeeded or failed.

36. The General Assembly has reiterated the need for strengthening the collection and compilation of national data and information about the situation of persons with disabilities in the context of realizing the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, for persons with disabilities[27] following existing guidelines on disability statistics.

37. The report of Secretary-General to the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, Keeping the promise: realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities towards 2015 and beyond (A/65/173), reviewed the status of data collection and statistics on disability. As noted in that report, there has been in the collection of improved disability data some progress at the global, regional, subregional and national levels. At the same time, there is still the need for States to collect and report disability data and statistics in a more proactive manner. This conclusion was supported by the findings of the *World Report on Disability*,[4] published by the World Bank and WHO in 2011, which provided several recommendations on strengthening data collection at international and national levels.

38. It therefore remains important for the United Nations system to work with Governments to support the development of national capacity to collect disability data and statistics, as well as to promote the gathering of information regarding the situation of persons with disabilities in national-level data-collection efforts, including censuses. Data collection at the national level, in particular, should follow internationally established concepts and methodologies that allow international comparison.

39. Periodic assessments of the state of statistics and analysis of disability would provide further guidance to key stakeholders regarding data collection. In this regard, it is worth noting that the United Nations Statistics Division produces a number of publication series on other specific issues that provide the latest information on their respective topics. These include *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics*,[28] which has provided a foundation for the pursuit of the equality of women as a mainstream development issue. At the regional level, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has published three editions of *Disability at a Glance*,[29] which provide a snapshot of disability statistics and information in the region, including with regard to the population of persons with disabilities and national policy, programmes and institutional mechanisms on disability matters. Through the preparation of a similar periodic report at the global level on the situation of persons with disabilities in economic and social development, Member States and relevant United Nations entities, together with other stakeholders, could contribute substantially to mainstreaming disability in the development agenda.

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[27] Recent examples include General Assembly resolutions 65/186, para. 13, 64/131, para. 10 and 63/150, para. 5.

[28] *The World's Women* was first published in 1991. The 2010 edition is the fifth in the series.

[29] ST/ESCAP/2421 (2004), ST/ESCAP/2513 (2009) and ST/ESCAP/2583 (2010).

Research and good practices

40. Evidence-based research on specific disability issues and on the situation of persons with disabilities could improve understanding of their needs and the barriers they face. The United Nations system has made substantial contributions in this area. Notably, as discussed in the preceding section, WHO and the World Bank launched the *World Report on Disability* in June 2011.[4]

41. The compilation and sharing of well-documented best practices at the national, regional and international levels can also contribute to effective approaches to development by informing stakeholders of strategies that have worked elsewhere and about barriers faced and lessons learned in relevant projects. In its resolution 65/186, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to "provide information on best practices at international, regional, subregional and national levels for including persons with disabilities in all aspects of development efforts".

42. In response to that request, in 2011, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs produced an initial set of criteria for best practices,[30] including a compilation of "prototype" case studies by way of example, to launch an official call for further case studies to all stakeholders in preparation for the proposed high-level meeting on disability and development to be held during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

43. In addition to the initiative by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, academic institutions and civil society organizations have made excellent contributions to the compilation of good practices. These include the ongoing initiative for a global database by the Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre at the University of London and the World Bank, as well as the "Making it Work" initiative, launched by Handicap International.

44. The utility of statistical data, research publications and information on best practices is maximized by their broad dissemination. Effective distribution includes making such materials and information, as well as international instruments such as the Convention, the standardized rules and the programme of action, as widely available in languages and accessible formats as possible.

Capacity-building of key stakeholders

45. To accelerate the mainstreaming of disability in development, key stakeholders must be informed and aware of the situation of persons with disabilities, as well as their rights and corresponding responsibilities as set out in international norms and instruments. Stakeholders must also have relevant technical skills, for example with regard to the gathering of appropriate disability statistics. The development of educational and guidance materials and the carrying out of training sessions for key stakeholders are therefore of great importance. In this regard, the development by

[30] The criteria set out by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for a best practice example are that it must: adopt a rights-based approach; be results-based and produce a measurable change; ensure equality and be non-discriminatory; recognize the interaction between gender and disability; increase awareness and understanding of disability; be accessible in the widest sense to people with all disabilities; be participatory, actively and meaningfully involving persons with disabilities in all matters concerning them; be accountable to persons with disabilities; be appropriately resourced; be sustainable; be replicable; and involve effective partnerships. For further information, see CRPD/CSP/2011/CRP.1.

the Inter-Agency Support Group and the United Nations Development Group of a guidance note on including the rights of persons with disabilities in United Nations programming at the country level for United Nations country teams and implementing partners, as discussed above, is a particularly valuable resource to support the mainstreaming of disability.

46. As discussed in the report of the Secretary-General to the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities (A/66/128), a number of organizations of the United Nations system have undertaken substantial efforts to strengthen the capacity of their staff members to deal with disability issues and to encourage the inclusion of disability in their respective areas of work. However, in order to achieve full integration of the disability perspective in international development efforts, capacity-building efforts for both awareness raising and the development of technical skills should be scaled up to address the current gaps among staff members of the United Nations system, at all levels, as well as civil society organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities, Government officials and those in the private sector.

B. Promote and strengthen international cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships

47. International cooperation is an important vehicle for the mainstreaming of disability in the context of multi-stakeholder networks. International cooperation promotes public awareness and advocacy, fosters disability-sensitive national policies and programmes, builds a solid knowledge based on the situation of persons with disabilities, supports the assessment of national capacity gaps and enables the evaluation and monitoring of the impact of development policies and programmes on persons with disabilities and on their communities.

48. To date, the full potential of mainstreaming disability in international cooperation remains to be realized.[31] Evidence shows that, while several development agencies have made progress in mainstreaming disability in their policies and guidelines on development cooperation, most have yet to take the "twin-track approach" to mainstream disability across all their policies and guidelines, although many have some experience with initiatives that support disability-specific programmes.

Disability mainstreaming in international cooperation

49. Increasingly, the international community is using multiple international development cooperation frameworks, including South-South cooperation, which provides a new framework and modality for different forms of partnership-building, in pursuit of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

50. Mainstreaming disability is a new concept for many countries and remains a major challenge, especially in the case of developing countries. South-South cooperation provides an opportunity to develop an efficient modality to promote the inclusion of disability in development cooperation among countries facing similar

[31] See A/CN.5/2010/6.

concerns and challenges. It can maximize the available data, statistics and information, expertise and resources to enhance the sustainability of efforts to mainstream disability. It can also renew the incentive to promote disability-sensitive development processes at the local/regional level. Furthermore, development agencies could capitalize on the experience of triangular cooperation to bridge the gap between the inclusion of disability in South-South cooperation and traditional North-South cooperation.

51. Many regional and subregional partnerships for development cooperation have expressed the need to address the concerns of persons with disabilities in efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. During the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the representatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Caribbean Community, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the Southern African Development Community emphasized the importance of disability-inclusive economic and social development, in particular with regard to access to social services, programmes and training for the empowerment of persons with disabilities. This represents a promising start towards enhancing coordination in mainstreaming disability within the context of regional and subregional development cooperation frameworks. In this regard, there is a role for the United Nations in consolidating current efforts. For example, international cooperation on the subject could be established between the United Nations and the Organization of American States which has adopted the Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities.[32]

52. It is recognized that the recent trends in international cooperation provide both opportunities and challenges for mainstreaming disability. The new aid modalities, such as sector-wide approaches and direct budget support, place greater emphasis on nationally driven priorities and planning processes to achieve the internationally agreed development goals aimed at achieving greater donor harmonization and alignment for the use of aid, as expressed in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of 2005. As international cooperation becomes increasingly demand-driven, the role of persons with disabilities and their organizations, as both agents and beneficiaries at all levels of national decision-making processes, is also becoming more prominent. Hence, it is more important than ever to intensify efforts to promote national capacity-building, both of persons with disabilities and their organizations and of Governments and policymakers, to enable them to fulfil their roles in implementing national development priorities.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

53. The multidimensional nature of disability that governs multi-stakeholder partnerships, in which each partner's efforts and outputs complement the efforts of the others, is essential to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development. Multi-stakeholder partnerships can help to strengthen ownership and accountability, and thereby increase both the scale and effectiveness of disability-inclusive development projects and programming.

54. Over the past several years, the Global Partnership for Disability and Development, founded by the World Bank,[33] has served as an important mechanism

[32] Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/sigs/a-65.html).

[33] See http://www.gpdd-online.org.

in enhancing the sharing of knowledge and capacity-building efforts for promoting disability in development. The Global Partnership is particularly effective in the area of development cooperation, through engagement with the United Nations system and other stakeholders, working at all levels with development agencies, financial and academic institutions and organizations of person with disabilities.

55. Strengthening partnerships between global and national partners opens up new opportunities and approaches to mainstreaming disability by capitalizing on the strengths of each partner in order to achieve the optimal outcome for persons with disabilities in a given economic, social, cultural and political setting. Greater sensitivity to sociocultural, economic and political diversity can improve strategies for disability-inclusive development.

56. Recognizing that socially inclusive development processes have emerged as a priority for many development partners, a concerted effort could be made to expand partnerships, including those stakeholders that have had successes in mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of women.

57. Efforts in furthering the goal of disability-inclusive development have also been made through strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the private sector. In 2010, the Disability Resource Team of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and its Bureau for Employers' Activities established the ILO Global Business and Disability Network in order to share knowledge, develop joint products (such as an enhanced database of disability laws), strengthen employers' networks and link companies and other groups to country-level ILO or other disability activities.

58. At the Secretariat level, the Global Compact Office has worked to expand system-wide cooperation with the business community.[34] It could provide an important entry point for United Nations efforts to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and disability-inclusive development.[35]

C. Create enabling and accessible environments for persons with disabilities and their communities

59. Environment influences a person's experience, either as a barrier or a catalyst. Persons with disabilities face environmental barriers and obstacles in daily life in most societies. Creating barrier-free and enabling environments for persons with disabilities is indispensable to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. Article 9 and other related articles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities embodies this concept, highlighting accessibility as a precondition to realizing full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in society and development. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2010/13, has also called for the promotion of accessibility to all aspects of environments and to information and communication technologies (ICTs) and has emphasized the importance of mainstreaming accessibility requirements in all development efforts.

[34] See A/62/341.

[35] The 10 principles of the Global Compact include: principle 1: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and principle 2: make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses; and principle 6: [Business should uphold] the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

60. In most countries, the physical infrastructure is largely inaccessible to persons with disabilities. In order to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, measures should be undertaken to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to physical environments, eliminating obstacles and barriers to indoor and outdoor facilities.[36] It is critical to ensure that all new infrastructure built be accessible to persons with disabilities by following the universal design model, which is a design framework aimed at benefiting the widest possible range of individuals in the widest range of situations, including, for example, women during pregnancy, mothers with young children and the elderly, without the need for special or separate designs.[37]

61. The barriers of inaccessible ICT infrastructure also stand in the way of persons with disabilities, limiting opportunities and sabotaging their full inclusion and participation in society. In order to close the persistent gaps between persons with and without disabilities in access to ICT, effective use of innovative and affordable ICT, as well as upgrades of existing ICT infrastructure, are critical. In addition, it is essential to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to vital information, such as that of emergency management and related services, through enhanced access to ICT.

62. From a human development perspective, creating enabling environments for persons with disabilities means much more than developing policies pertaining to accessibility and implementing measures for building barrier-free physical environments and ICT. It requires a shift in the thinking and approach for an overall policy framework to incorporate progressive removal of barriers for the full and effective participation of all members of society in economic and social development. This shift should be accompanied by strengthened efforts to provide equal opportunities for persons with disabilities (including employment) and to promote their economic and social empowerment to "level the playing field". While progress has been made in this sphere, there still is an urgent need to further promote accessibility, both as a key development policy goal and an important means of strategizing the empowerment of persons with disabilities, to realize an inclusive society for all.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

63. The United Nations system has made notable progress towards mainstreaming disability in the development agenda through its support to the Governments and the international community, including through research and analysis on disability as a cross-cutting development issue. The United Nations has also strengthened its efforts towards a system-wide approach to mainstreaming disability in the policies and programmes of its respective entities, including in country programming within the United Nations operational framework. Furthermore, the role of the United Nations in forging new forms of partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, and in particular with organizations of persons with disabilities, is providing new

[36] Convention on the Rights o ersons with Disabilities, article 9, para. 1.

[37] The cost of including accessible features at the time of construction is minimal, with a study indicating that it is more cost-effective to design a barrier-free building than to renovate an existing building to make it fully accessible to persons with disabilities. Further information is available from http://www.make-development-inclusive.com.

opportunities and forums for promoting linkages between disability and the mainstream development agenda.

64. The international community should seize every opportunity to include disability as a cross-cutting development issue in the global development agenda. In particular, as the final deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals draws near, the international community has before it the opportunity to ensure that disability is included in any emerging development framework beyond 2015.

65. Inclusion of disability should be ensured in all aspects of the emerging post-2015 United Nations development framework, as well as in the dialogues and outcomes of relevant United Nations development conferences, including the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012.

66. Member States, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders should accelerate the efforts to apply internationally recommended guidelines, principles and methodologies for collecting and analysing data and statistics on the situation of persons with disabilities in economic and social development. These efforts will result in improved, internationally comparable data and statistics on disability. Such data should then be submitted through appropriate reporting mechanisms within the United Nations system in order to provide a basis for analytical studies and reporting on disability data and statistics. In turn, the United Nations, based on such data and statistics and many decades of experience in monitoring and evaluation of development issues, should develop a global periodic report on the situation of persons with disabilities in development, as an official publication.

67. Training modules and workshops pertaining to inclusion of disability and persons with disabilities in the development agenda for the United Nations system throughout its Headquarters, regions and country offices, as well as its implementing partners, should be developed and carried out to raise awareness, knowledge and competencies, with a view to accelerating the mainstreaming of disability and the disability perspective in development activities.

68. In the context of mainstreaming disability in international development cooperation, the capacity of the development community, including policymakers, practitioners and experts, should be strengthened in order to promote understanding of the economic and social situation of persons with disabilities and the barriers they face in the context of development processes. In this regard, Governments and the United Nations system should ensure the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development policies and programmes.

69. Mainstreaming disability is emerging as an important priority for many development partners. In this respect, the United Nations should continue to play its role in coordinating efforts at the national and regional levels to scale up efforts by forging partnerships for international cooperation between the United Nations system and regional and subregional organizations.

70. Strengthening partnerships for mainstreaming disability could open up new opportunities and approaches to promote inclusive development. The United Nations and its partners could enhance cooperation with national and local partners

to optimize development outcomes for persons with disabilities in a given socio-economic, cultural and political context.

71. The role of the private sector should be further explored, in the context of partnerships with the United Nations system in its effort to achieve global development objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals, for persons with disabilities.

72. Governments and the United Nations system, in collaboration with other stakeholders, should accelerate efforts to ensure accessibility to both physical environments and ICT and to step up policy development and implementing measures for progressive removal of barriers for all members of society. These efforts should be in tandem with policy development and implementing measures for the empowerment of persons with disabilities in society and in development.